



**Testimony re: Governor's Bill No. 6663 (HB663): AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE ENGLISH
LANGUAGE LEARNERS' BILL OF RIGHTS**

Submitted to:
Connecticut General Assembly-Education Committee

Submitted by:
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Thank you, Co-Chairs Currey and Douglas, Vice Chairs Leeper and Winfield, Ranking members McCarthy and Berthel and all other distinguished members of the Education Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Ingrid Alvarez and I am the Vice president for Policy and Strategic Engagement for Hispanic Federation (HF); a non-profit organization seeking to empower and advance Hispanic communities through programs and legislative advocacy. HF's testimony is also informed by the leading community-based serving and advocacy member organizations and partners committed to improving Latino outcomes and opportunities in the state.

Hispanic Federation works to highlight and address the educational needs of Latino students in the following ways: identifying and supporting effective practice; public policy advocacy and research; and the advancement of a shared educational agenda.

I am here to advocate for Latino students in Connecticut, who are still struggling through the ongoing challenges that COVID-19 has posed to their learning. As we continue to navigate the impacts of the pandemic on student learning, we must ensure that all students and their parents have the academic supports and access to critical communications to ensure their success.

HF would like to acknowledge and publicly thank Representative Antonio Felipe and Juan Candelaria for championing HB 6663: AN ACT TO ESTABLISH AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS' PARENT BILL OF RIGHTS. HF is in full support of HB 6663 as it presents a critical first step in addressing that all students have access to positive school experiences for learning and social-emotional development regardless of immigration status and the language they speak because it is a unique opportunity to tackle policies we have yet to address or implement and to make significant investments in our education system to meet the pressing needs of our children. The Connecticut General Assembly can ensure these investments are clearly appropriated in the Biennial Budget.



Investments for Parent Engagement

Academic success does not stop in the classroom. It is critical that there are added resources for parent engagement and bridging the gaps for immigrant families and multilingual/ELL families as well. An added stressor for students who come from multilingual families is having to translate and communicate the assignments and announcements given by schools. Investments that enable schools to bolster their methods to reach families, particularly undocumented and mixed-status families who historically have been fearful to reach out for support is critical. Acknowledging and supporting the various demographics of families in each school will serve both the student and school by seeing better academic performance and student outcomes. It is crucial for parents to be meaningfully engaged in their children's education. Parent engagement can only be possible with linguistically relevant and responsive supports that consider English language barriers that may prevent parents from helping their students academically.

Supports for Multilingual Learners (MLLs)/English Language Learners (ELLs) and Bilingual Teachers

Supports for multilingual learners is another crucial investment. After English, Spanish is the second most spoken language in our schools. Failing to invest in multilingual learners will neglect an entire population of students. Additional investments in the state budget can ensure schools provide the additional materials, services, and faculty Multilingual Learners (MLLs) and English Language Learners (ELLs) need for academic success and college and career readiness. This includes consistent culturally competent interpretation/translation services. Intentional investments for MLLs/ELLs can provide schools the opportunity for additional professional learning to address the specific needs of MLLs/ELLs, including content in home languages. This lends to added parental engagement activities in English and in students' home languages, giving parents guidance on effective strategies to support their children's learning in and out of school.

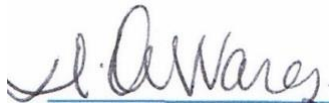
Language Access Equity and Inclusive Supports

We commend the many state representatives that support this critical piece of legislation to address the inequities of ELL students' needs by codifying a Parent Bill of Rights that includes clear pathways for high quality parent orientations and access to professionally qualified translators and/or interpreters. It also equally addresses in words and action the importance of students and families by delineating a student's right to accessible core grade level programming, rigorous coursework and the right for students and parents to engage the Connecticut State Department of Education for concerns and recourse regarding a child's right to English Language Learner services and accommodations. This, especially for Latino and underserved students, is an overdue improvement within their local school districts.

In summation, the Connecticut General Assembly holds a unique opportunity to address these gaps in the Biennial Budget and include supports for Latino and underserved students by making investments that provide access to socio-emotional supports, increase parent engagement, expand supports for Multilingual Learners and English Language Learners, and improve resources to guide students towards fulfilling postsecondary and career opportunities. I thank you for your



time and reemphasize the imperative to prioritize these investments and welcome any opportunities for partnership.



J. Alvarez